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The Era of Preaching in Sinim.

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AFTER some preliminary sentences concerning the differences between times past and present in general evangelistic work, a few theories about the true object and aim of missions will be noticed, and then the special theme, "The Era of Preaching," * will be briefly unfolded.

I.

The first feature of the centenary era is

THE INFLUENCE OF WOMAN IN THE STREET CHAPEL.

This in a figurative sense may be denominated "An Angelic Ministry." The heading is intended to attract the eye of two thousand "elect ladies" who labor with us in other departments of mission work and lead them to consider the opportunities of the hour in honoring the daily service with the light and joy their presence affords. The attendance of Priscilla makes the assembly reverent, gives solemnity to the meeting, keeps the audience in a more attentive attitude and helps Aquila to speak like Apollos. After the first or second discourse is finished, and the "women's side" is filled, the female portion of the congregation is led into an adjoining hall for special instruction. In many places the street-chapel has for decades borne the burden of daily preaching "To Men Only;" now there are at present both men and women. Let us take it as a happy omen for the women of Cathay.

* See "Preaching in Sinim."

DIVINE SERVICE.

There is a suggestion that we call the church where Christians assemble on the Sabbath "The Worship Hall" and the chapel to which the heathen come during the six days, "The Preaching Hall." Let this be as seems best to the united body of evangelists. The tendency should be to elevate the daily service so as, in a measure, to approximate the worship on the Lord's day. The offering of short prayers while the people stand, the reading of brief passages of Scripture, the singing of hymns written in large characters on scrolls, are essential parts of the devotional service. The ideal street-chapel has a choir, composed perchance of pupils from the school on the premises.

THE OLD PREACHER NOT UP TO DATE.

In this the writer may be mistaken, but it has seemed to him when listening to a father address a non-Christian audience that his style was more suited to the Morrisonian age than to the present era of preaching in Sinim. The very elementary statement of first truths is not quite compatible with the nation's rapid advancement in Western education. Knowledge has begun to run to and fro in this land, and though the spiritual darkness is great, yet truth need not be clothed in thought and language which pertained to the early part of the last century. The style of preaching during the last decade has changed. Because the hoary-headed minister came out to China in a sailing vessel it is not necessary in this day of reform "to round the Cape" when addressing a pagan audience.

THE STUDENT IN THE LANGUAGE SINENSIS.

The question arises, Is there the same zeal, the same diligence, the same energy displayed in preparing for preaching as ten years ago? Has not the introduction of English into the school system, the association with Chinese who speak a few words of our mother tongue, and the seeking of a short-cut to active work had a tendency to injure voice-culture and the acquisition of language? Is there not an inclination on the part of some who have retiring dispositions to seek the sweet quiet of the mission compound—avoiding the busy thoroughfare—and at four p.m. to use the tennisonian method of taking bodily exercise? May there not be quiet satisfaction in

preparing for future work on the knees without also by diligent study seeking for the first gift of the Holy Spirit the "gift of tongues?" Alas for the day when the favourite hymn in the Missionary Psalmody is

"When this poor lisping stammering tongue."

Why should the lips lisp and the tongue stammer in this linguistic era?

This is not generally the case. Model students are legion. Using in the study the score of grammars, vocabularies, hand-books and lexicons, they throw themselves for hours daily among the people and swim in a colloquial sea. They thus learn to think in Chinese and speak like a native.

In preparing for the crisis in missions the main point is to master *modern Chinese*, to become familiar with the thought as well as the style of the native press, and to keep abreast of the new publications issued by the leading native publishing houses. In the perusal of this literature a mine of new expressions is opened and a wealth of current idiom is obtained, which, used in the pulpit, has a magnetic power in attracting both "the classes" and "the masses." Daily add to the native vocabulary and God will add the unction. With an enlarged sphere of language let the deeper truths of the Gospel be preached; yet not "with excellency of speech" nor "with enticing words of man's wisdom."

II.

We shall now consider some theories in reference to the missionary work. The first is

THE INFLUENCE THEORY.

It may be stated thus. The holy walk is the principal thing: to let the heathen behold in us the beauty of Christian graces, to show forth in our example the life of Christ. We are of the opinion that missionaries alone maintain this theory. At home the pastor may be spiritually minded, but to hold his congregation he must possess pulpit power. Patients are not satisfied with a godly physician; he must have skill. The lawyer may be an elder or a vestry man, but it is his legal ability which secures practice. There is no question but that the missionary must be a "holy man of God," yet he need not keep his words within closed lips, like ointment shut up in a bottle: only occasionally pulling out the cork. This may be termed a lazy theory.

Take the picture of Paul at Thessalonica. "Ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us and of the Lord." But did he pose—to use the figure of the studio—as a man renowned for his piety and not preach throughout the provinces of Asia Minor and the cities of Macedon and Greece? The Master states both sides of the question, "These ought ye to have done and not to have left the other undone."

THE PASTOR PASTORUM.

The second theory is that the missionary's great work is *to teach*, and there are frequent references by those not engaged in the direct work of preaching to the prophetic office of our Lord and Master. His disciples were the future pastors and He was the Pastor Pastorum. Christ did teach the twelve when He was separated from the host of followers. This was His private ministry. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard the wondrous power of this instruction!

While this is true we should carefully study the public ministry of our Lord, as is expressed in the words, "And seeing the multitudes;" "and He taught" (that is, *preached*) "in their synagogues being glorified of them all;" "and great multitudes were gathered together unto Him, so that He went into a ship and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore;" "and Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom;" "and His fame went throughout all Syria . . . and there followed Him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan."

Where were the congregations of four thousand and five thousand? The disciples said: "Master, the multitude through thee and press thee." Did not blind Bartimaeus hear the tread of a "great number of people?" Who wished to see Jesus at Jericho but "could not for the press?" When on "the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried," is it not said, "Many of the people heard?" During the week preceding His crucifixion is it not written, "He taught the people in the temple and preached the Gospel?"

The Book of Acts is considered the model for the church's evangelistic work. In this we are told that the apostles preached. At Pentecost Peter spoke to a mighty assemblage. Shortly afterwards in the temple "all the people ran together" to listen to his discourse. He preached the first sermon to the

uncircumcised. Paul's life is largely a book of sermons. We therefore conclude, To preach is first and foremost the work of the evangelist.

THE NATIVE MINISTER VERSUS THE FOREIGN MISSIONARY.

A third theory is the relative importance of the Chinese and the Western preacher. The plea is that the call at this time is not so much for foreign missionaries as for native ministers. The small stipend, the gift of language, and the racial instincts are presented as arguments by those who urge the superior efficiency of the former agency.

There is no question that we need a thoroughly equipped Chinese ministry. Also that we should obey Christ's command and pray to the Lord of the harvest. Why this should be used as an argument against sending to China thousands of Anglo-Saxon evangelists we cannot conceive. Each missionary hopes that his labors will be blessed in leading men to serve God in the ministry. If we have a thousand Western clergymen, we may be blessed in having ten thousand Chinese preachers; if we have ten thousand ordained missionaries in the middle kingdom, we may in years have one hundred thousand Chinese ministers.

The Anglo-Saxon has the advantage in a better intellectual equipment, in a wider experience and a more well-balanced judgment, and if he is a fluent speaker he attracts large congregations, so it will be a blessed thing if for some generations the Western Paul and the Chinese Barnabas may labor side by side in the work.

MEN SET APART FOR LITERARY WORK.

A fourth theory is that men engaged in the preparation of Christian books should give their whole time to this work. In many cases it is absolutely necessary, as in Bible translation. Sinologues who are separated for this work become eminent in their knowledge of the Chinese language.

The writer is incompetent to give an opinion on the question and simply remarks that it is well to keep in touch with the people so as to avoid preparing theoretical volumes, to maintain the intellectual and practical balance, and to keep the heart warmed by daily preaching. In the medical department, as a general rule, only the works of practicing physicians are considered standard, and in medical schools the teachers are usually regular practitioners.

EDUCATION, THE MOST HOPEFUL METHOD.

The fifth theory is, to meet the present crisis in China, education is first and evangelization second. Of the practical advocates in giving education a place in the front rank perhaps Americans are in the majority. It has been said, "If we desire to transform China, by far the most hopeful method is through the speedy development of our existing educational plants." We do not question the importance of Christian education, but its place in the kingdom of God is that of an auxiliary. Many of the schools in China teach the higher branches of a Western education, but only the church teaches the alphabet of Heaven. Learning is valuable, but religion is essential.

III.

Passing by these theories we come to the main topic,

THE ERA OF PREACHING IN SINIM.

1. IT IS A DAY OF CHANGE. "O! rock! when wilt thou open?" was the cry of a man of old. The rock is split in twain from summit to base. The changes—governmental, political, commercial, educational, social, martial and naval—are all radical.

The hoary systems of the past are like an oak-built ship which has struck a reef and been broken in pieces, and as its timbers are borne along on the tide, who are the men brave enough to risk this current, and what are the grappling-irons by which these great beams can be drawn to the shore and a larger, stronger, grander vessel be built which will be able to convey its passengers to the "desired haven?"

2. THE UNITY OF SENTIMENT.—The recent boycott has proved that the Chinese can, when the occasion arises, be as the heart of one man. We behold "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision;" let us hear the voice of the pentecostal prophet, "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe." The question before us is, How China is to crystallize on the all-important matter of religion? We may let this day pass and the church's opportunity be lost. Shoot on the wing or the birds of passage may light on the other side of the stream. There are Gospel currents from the shores of the Pacific and Atlantic; alas! a great infidel wave is sweeping across the Yellow Sea! The labourer must hear the apostolic alarum, "Awake thou that sleepest!"

3. **THE DENSE RELIGIOUS IGNORANCE OF THE HIGHER CLASSES.**—In our modern Corinth, “Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.” We deal with a race of Gallios. There are many exceptions, but it is astonishing how many of the gentry are unacquainted with the vital truths of Christianity. They are ashamed to read the Bible.

4. **THE FINE CONGREGATIONS.**—The people gather to hear the Word. Often the elders from the towns remark, “I have been frequently to your chapel.” Or a district magistrate is heard to say, “When at the capital I was a constant attendant on your services.” The hearers who come to the house of God represent all classes of society, especially the prosperous and the thoughtful.

The medical work, though increasing in importance as stations with foreigners are increasing in number, is not at this era so essential as in the first opening of the stations. As the government schools follow in a measure Western lines, missionary institutions of learning have heavy competition, especially in the upper branches. Evangelistic work, on the other hand, is meeting with high success, for this is the day of the church in Sinim.

5. **SUNDAY IN THE SCHOOLS AND FACTORIES.**—Seven years ago the teachers tried one day in ten, but the seventh day, as a holiday, is now universal. This is a wonderful thing! On the Lord’s day we may spread the net and catch the youth of Cathay. The holiday may be turned into a holy-day. Some of the factories and silk-filatures close every other Sunday.

6. **THE COUNTRY WORK.**—Here is three-fourths of China. Throughout the land the greatest success is not in the large cities. Nearly every town desires a church; sometimes as a mark of respectability. The Christian church in the Soochow prefecture is growing. Self-support adds zeal and interest to the little bands of followers. Chapels are not only being rented but also purchased by the converts and inquirers. “When thou hearest a sound in the tops of the mulberry trees, then bestir thyself.”

7. **PREACHING IN THE THEATRES.**—A score of years ago in the Sunrise Kingdom great meetings were held in the theatres or large halls, and the Japanese would sit for hours listening to a series of discourses. The question comes, as the Chinese are holding public meetings and are beginning to taste

the pleasures of eloquence, if throughout the great cities this method might not be utilized? Union services with selected speakers, fully advertised and backed with a good choir of fifty voices, might prove successful. Educational meetings are held on Sunday, as on that day the teachers are free, and might not 1,000 or 1,500 be gathered to hear the Gospel preacher? It is a day of great things, and the city in which this feature of missionary services is initiated may become the Antioch of China.

8. PREACHING IS A HAPPY WORK.—It is following the Lord's commands. It is walking in His footsteps. There are no discouragements, for the burden of souls is rolled upon the Lord. We walk in the light which is the path of duty. When in the pulpit the voice is never heard, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" but the sweet notes come to the ear, "Lo! I am with you alway." O! taste and see that preaching is good. After holding about 16,000 chapel services the writer speaks from experience.

There is great need for intercessory prayer to be offered in the closet, at the family altar, during the hour of weekly prayer and in the sanctuary for the protracted services that are held in the city, that the speakers be endued with power and the hearers quickened by the Holy Ghost. If special services for a couple of weeks are held, the quickening of the united devotions is quite noticeable; how much more should those be remembered who in summer and winter, spring and autumn, stand daily between the living and the dead?

9. THE SCHOOL AND THE PULPIT.—In the past generation the school and the pulpit were related as the fountain and the stream; unfortunately under the "new education" they have become partially divorced. The question at the Centenary is, How shall this happy relation be restored? Our answer is, Let the teachers be preachers and lead the pupils into active Christian work. Let the "Preaching Hall," where the pagan is taught the way of life, be an adjunct of the college and the senior students take part in evangelistic services. Thus a desire to make known the glad tidings to their countrymen will be developed along with their intellectual and spiritual life. Considering questions like this will keep the Centenary Conference on the main line of saving a dying nation and not let this general assembly of Protestant ministers be *side-tracked* on the minor details incident to missionary work in general.

IO. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HOUR.—There are now two hundred thousand Christians in China, and with the adherents who come to church the number under our influence is fully a million. There yet remains 399,000,000, and the problem is to present God's plan of salvation to this great multitude now living, but soon to be numbered among the dead. The missionary body cries, "Who is sufficient for these things?" The workers and the work are largely in the eastern section and the great west is very thinly occupied. Let all aid. Besides the host militant, let Presidents and Directors, Bishops and Superintendents, Agents and Secretaries, Editors and Publishers, Doctors and Nurses, Professors and Teachers, each give a tithe of his time to telling the old, old story to some of the 399 millions yet without the fold! The influence of this evangelistic movement will prove an inspiration to the native church, enlist the energies of a multitude of workers and be the precursor of great revivals. The revival of preaching in the foreign missionary ranks will be a forerunner of mighty conversions.

THE NESTOR OF SINIM.

At the Centenary Conference the Life and Labors of Morrison, the pioneer, will be the topic of one evening. A greater than Morrison, sent out by the same Society, has lived in Shanghai; the late Dr. William Muirhead, the Nestor of Sinim. He came from the land of prayer and psalm, and trained in the Kirk he knew his Bible, and with the Word as his sword he joined the feeble band who faced the proud hosts that bowed at heathen shrines. In the afternoon at three with Dr. Medhurst, who daily left the delegates' desk, he went to the chapel, and soon with tongue of fire he began to preach, and for the space of five decades never failed to tell lost men of Christ the Lord. The clear notes of his voice, so strong and yet so clear, filled the largest halls, and in open spaces, under the dome of the blue sky, he held spell-bound vast Chinese audiences, who beheld him as an ambassador from Heaven's high court, beseeching men to be reconciled to God. Gathered from the plains of Central China, probably from his lips for the first time a couple of millions heard of Jesus the Saviour of men. These words of grace, spoken from the pulpit, his ministerial throne, have their part in ushering in the Gospel light of our second missionary century.